



Social capital, individual responses to heat waves and climate change adaptation: An empirical study of two UK cities

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Abstract:

It has been claimed that high social capital contributes to both positive public health outcomes and to climate change adaptation. Strong social networks have been said to support individuals and collective initiatives of adaptation and enhance resilience. As a result, there is an expectation that social capital could reduce vulnerability to risks from the impacts of climate change in the health sector. This paper examines evidence on the role social networks play in individuals' responses to heat wave risk in a case study in the UK. Based on interviews with independently living elderly people and their primary social contacts in London and Norwich, we suggest that strong bonding networks could potentially exacerbate rather than reduce the vulnerability of elderly people to the effects of heat waves. Most respondents interviewed did not feel that heat waves posed a significant risk to them personally, and most said that they would be able to cope with hot weather. Bonding networks could perpetuate rather than challenge these narratives and therefore contribute to vulnerability rather than ameliorating it. These results suggest a complex rather than uniformly positive relationship between social capital, health and adaptation to climate change. (C) 2009 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

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Resource Description

Communication: ☒

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Communication Audience: ☒

audience to whom the resource is directed

Health Professional, Policymaker, Researcher

Exposure : ☒

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Temperature

Temperature: Extreme Heat

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Geographic Feature:

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Urban

Geographic Location:

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

Non-United States: Europe

European Region/Country: European Country

Other European Country : England

Health Impact:

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Injury, Other Health Impact

Other Health Impact: heat stress

Mitigation/Adaptation:

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Population of Concern:

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Elderly

Resource Type:

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article

Resilience:

capacity of an individual, community, or institution to dynamically and effectively respond or adapt to shifting climate impact circumstances while continuing to function

A focus of content

Timescale:

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

Vulnerability/Impact Assessment:

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resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

A focus of content